

from their partial and isolated state, are, necessarily, imperfect authorities; and, of the former, it may "be observed, that they do not seem to offer anything materially at variance with the tenour of the first *Ashtaka*. It will be sufficient, therefore, for the present, to confine ourselves to the evidence at hand, and deduce, from it, a few of the most important conclusions to "which it appears to lead, regarding the religious and mythological belief of the people of India,—whose sentiments and notions the *Suktas* enunciate,—and the circumstances of their social condition, to which it occasionally, though briefly, adverts.

The worship which the *Suktas* describe comprehends offerings, prayer, and praise. The former are, chiefly, oblations and libations : clarified butter poured on fire, and the expressed and fermented juice of the *Soma* plant, presented, in ladles, to the deities invoked, —in what manner does not exactly appear, although it seems to have been, sometimes, sprinkled on the fire, sometimes, on the ground, or, rather, on the *J&isa*, or sacred grass, strewed on the floor; and, in all cases, the residue was drunk by the assistants.

The ceremony takes place in the dwelling of the worshipper, in a chamber appropriated to the purpose, and, probably, to the maintenance of a perpetual fire ; although the frequent allusions to¹ the occasional kindling of the sacred flame are rather at variance with this practice.¹¹ There

^a It is said, in one place, however, that men preserved fire *constantly kindled*- in their dwellings (Hymn LXXIII., v. 4: p. 195).